

That was in 1933. Other funds were later set aside by Congress as needed by the requirements. To-day, seven years later, the programme is more than half completed.

The Special Committee made personal investigations of some of the more acute problems. They recognised that research in the wildlife field was indispensable because all the factors affecting problems had to be understood before a comprehensive wildlife restoration plan could be inaugurated. Research is tedious and painful and sometimes requires many years before all the factors become known. Food, habits, disease, migrations, soil and climatic conditions, predators and many other factors influencing wildlife have been and are being carefully examined by the Biological Survey and other organisations.

The results achieved so far are that, despite the rapidly increasing number of hunters in the United States, shooting seasons are being extended, not curtailed, while the sanctuaries set up as waterfowl refuges have proved to be the saving factor in preventing the extermination of some expiring species of non-game birds.

The secretary of the Special Committee states in his report:—

“Wildlife is an organic resource, a product of the soil inseparable from the land. It depends upon the land for its nourishment, its protection and its very existence, and these essential requirements can be produced only through the wise use of land and water resources. Fortunately wildlife is one perishable natural resource which readily responds to sound management, and many practices which are beneficial to the soil provide the very things needed in wildlife conservation.”

Once again therefore we return to the all-essential topsoil and its protector, the native vegetation, in the form of strategically placed native forest and other native plant life, which forms an affinity with the soil and prevents its destruction by erosion.

Let us hope that some day the shooters, fishermen and indeed all those interested in wildlife will recognise that the well-being of each of their particular spheres hinges on the conservation of the topsoil and its protecting factors, that natural resources are inextricably interallied in matters of conservation, and that the work of unravelling the many problems arising is a job for one efficient organisation staffed by a skilled and enthusiastic personnel, whose aim would be to work for the common good. Such an organisation would be found in an efficiently managed Department of Conservation. The need for action is here to-day, nay, the time for action is long overdue. The preservation of the topsoil, upon which all life depends, should have prior attention to anything else and calls urgently for the best brains procurable, or, to put it in the words of a writer in “British Empire,” “the greatest problem of all facing the Empire to-day is not political or racial, or is it essential defence by armaments; it is geological, for without arable lands and a good water supply the British Empire would soon cease to exist.”

GREY DUCKS ON A SANCTUARY.

[Photo : Rangi Webber.]

